

Town of Washington

News and Calendar



January, 2006

Happy New Year!

First and foremost, I want to wish all the citizens of Washington Island a happy and prosperous New Year. If there is anything that I or one of the Supervisors can do to assist you in any way, please be sure to contact us. Over the years, I have learned that the question not asked, the suggestion not made, the complaint not expressed cannot be answered. So let us hear from you. It's all right to let us know if we do something right, too. Your Town government was elected to serve you all and we need your input to help us do our job as well as we can.

Contact Us

We have new e-mail addresses for the Town. To reach Valerie Carpenter, clerk/treasurer, or the Town in general, the e-mail address is townoffice@washingtonisle.org. To reach me, the address is chairman@washingtonisle.org. Also, in January we expect to have a Town Web Site up and running. The site will be www.washingtonisle.org. This web site will enable us to post information that may be helpful to

you, including agendas and minutes from Town Board meetings, the Town Calendar, this Newsletter and a host of other information that's generated by the Town. If you have a suggestion for information you would especially like to see posted on the web site, please let me know early in January.



L - R: At the First Annual Festival of Trees, TPAC Board members Betty Shellswick, Sally Clancy, Gene Callaghan and General Manager Kathy Sorrenson read a poem, written by Betty, thanking the community and all who in many ways have helped to make the Performing Arts Center a success.

Gymnasium and Library

By now, I expect most of you have heard that the Friends of Washington Island has concluded that they were unable to raise the funds they had hoped for to build the proposed Gymnasium and Library. This has certainly been a great disappointment to all of us.

I addressed this matter at the December Town Board Meeting, and I'd like to pass on my thoughts to the entire Town via this Newsletter.

The first point I want to make emphatically is that I have no intention of asking the Town Board to make any decision whatsoever on the future of the Gym/Library project without a clear mandate from

the Taxpayers of the Town at a formal Town Meeting. If it is the wish of the Town to put such a decision to a referendum vote, we will take that route.

However, before we get to any Town Meeting or Referendum, there are a great many questions that need to be asked and

answered. I have no intention of asking the Town to consider anything that cannot

be clearly spelled out. I have no intention of asking the Town to consider anything that is not realistic and doable.

My personal belief is that the Town of Washington does need a gymnasium and wellness center that could serve the needs of the entire

Continued on reverse.

Town. We do not need just a gym for the use of the School or an indoor walking track for adults; we need a facility that satisfies the real needs of the entire community. We need a facility that is better, safer, and more usable than the present gym. We do not need a palace. In the same vein, if we are going to vacate the present gym space, it might make sense to relocate the Library to all or a portion of that space and reconfigure the Office and Clinic spaces.

For me, the bottom line is that we need to come up with plans for facilities that are usable at the least possible cost. Only when we can present that information to the Town will we be in a position to have realistic discussions.

My understanding is that the Friends organization will have something between \$1.5 million and \$2 million available for the gym/library project. They have also indicated a willingness to continue to work to raise funds for a scaled-down project. This is certainly a helpful start toward paying for the project.

I want to make it clear that I do not, at this point in time, know if facilities that might meet our needs can actually be built at a cost that the Town would find reasonable. I do know that it's worth working to find the answer to

that question, and I intend to do so. For example, great strides have been made in the design and construction of metal buildings since the Community Center was built; it is possible that such a building could be utilized for the gym. An effective library could be built in the present gym space without a great deal of extra construction.

So, here's my plan: I intend to spend a good portion of the next six months investigating the possibilities with the informal help of a couple of knowledgeable advisors. If the estimated costs of building an acceptable gym and library seem to be within reach, given the fact of the funds already committed or pledged, then the discussion will be taken to the Town as outlined above.

A couple of thoughts about funding: One reason that many people, especially seasonal residents, gave for being hesitant to pledge support is the fact that such projects are generally funded by tax dollars in the form of a bond issue. The Town of Washington has made a real effort to be frugal in recent years, and we do our best to keep the tax levy as low as possible, consistent with the real needs of the town and its citizens. The suggestion was made that we might need only \$2.5 million more than the funds already on hand or pledged. A quick

look at the market for municipal bonds suggests that a 20-year bond issue for \$2.5 million would have a yearly debt-service cost to the town of some \$206,000. This would mean an increase of more than 25% above the levy for 2006 – for 20 years into the future. I have no intention of proposing such a plan.

However, if the project is seen to be realistic and without unnecessary frills, it is possible that more donors would be willing to step forward. It is also possible that the Town would be willing to consider borrowing a portion of the funds needed.

Until we have some believable answers to the hard questions that need to be asked, we can have no idea where the gym/library project will go. I hope to have those answers by the summer of 2006. Let me say also that it is my personal hope that a way can be found to make this project succeed at a reasonable level. The funds now on hand give us a head start that may never be available in the future.



Town Chairman